

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ALGIERS 002299

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2015

TAGS: PREL PTER AG

SUBJECT: NEA/MAG ACTING DIRECTOR'S CALL ON PRESIDENTIAL COUNSELOR FOR COUNTER-TERRORISM

Classified By: Ambassador Richard W. Erdman,
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY

¶11. (C) During her familiarization visit to Algeria, NEA/MAG Acting Director Ellen Germain called November 15 on Presidential Counselor for Counter-terrorism issues Rezag Bara. After thanking each other's countries for their cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts, Rezag Bara singled out the Trans-Sahel Counter-terrorism Initiative for praise and called on countries to rise above bilateral political problems in the fight against terrorism. He said it was a mistake for terrorist entities to justify their internal acts based on external issues such as Iraq and Israel. He noted said the European Union had not added Algeria's main terrorist group, the GSPC, to its list of terrorist organizations, although it had placed it on a separate list making the group's assets subject to being frozen. On Libya, where he recently served as Algeria's Ambassador, he thought the Libyan Government would balance its need to mobilize Libyan public opinion with its other needs on the international scene and that commuting the death sentences of the Bulgarian nurses was a distinct possibility. (End Summary.)

¶12. (C) NEA/MAG Acting Director Ellen Germain, accompanied by Ambassador and PolEc Chief, called on Presidential Counselor for Counter-terrorism issues Rezag Bara November 15. Germain expressed U.S. appreciation for Algeria's counter-terrorism support, and Rezag Bara thanked the U.S. for its support for its support of Algeria, especially counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel such as the Trans-Sahel Counter-terrorism Initiative (TSCTI).

TRANS-SAHEL COOPERATION

¶13. (C) Rezag Bara hoped that military and intelligence cooperation among the Sahel countries could be expanded under the TSCTI. He cited three examples of successes due to such cooperation. One was the release of European hostages thanks to efforts by Nigeria, Mali, and Niger. The capture and return of the terrorist El-Para would not have been possible absent cooperation from Chad, Niger, and Libya. Finally, a large shipment of arms from Mali was recently intercepted. Rezag Bara stressed the importance of developing further the political and diplomatic channels for such cooperation, noting that military cooperation alone was insufficient. Citing UNSC Resolution 1373 as the basis of international cooperation, he said countries should set aside their bilateral problems when it comes to counter-terrorism cooperation.

TERRORISM IS TERRORISM

¶14. (C) Without naming names, Rezag Bara faulted some groups in the broader Middle East for facilitating a false understanding of the terrorist threat all countries, Muslim included, faced. Mixing the fight against terrorism with issues of Palestine and religion was unhelpful. Palestine/Israel and Iraq needed to be addressed separately from problems internal to states. Germain agreed on the need for drawing distinctions. It was possible to make progress on one conflict without linking it to others.

¶15. (C) Asked by Ambassador whether the European Union had agreed to list the GSPC as a terrorist group, Rezag Bara said the group only appeared on the list that subjected its assets to being frozen. There had not been a real explanation of why the GSPC did not appear on the terrorism list. Rezag Bara speculated that it might be due to the lack of consensus among the 25 member states.

¶16. (C) Responding to Ambassador's question about trends in the recruitment, surrender, and attack patterns of terrorists following the passage of the National Reconciliation measure in September, Rezag Bara said it was too early to make an assessment. The security services were, he said, currently preparing such assessments.

ASSESSMENT OF LIBYAN INTENTIONS
IN THE BULGARIAN NURSES' CASE

17. (C) Turning to Libya, where Rezag Bara recently served as Algeria's Ambassador, Germain asked him for any insights, especially on how the Libyan leadership would decide the fate of Bulgarian nurses facing death sentences. Rezag Bara said Libya viewed the West as a monolith. He thought Libya would play the nurses as a card for Libyan needs in other areas and that a commutation of the sentence was possible. The Libyan Government, he continued, needed to continue to inspire fear and keep the Libyan people united against external forces. Germain commented in response that Libya perhaps needed to find a way to save face and change the sentence without appearing to have given in to the international community. Rezag Bara agreed that Libya considered the plight of the nurses an internal matter, but Libya would balance its need to mobilize Libyan public opinion with its other needs on the international scene: WMD/terrorism, Pam Am 103 compensation, and oil exports.

18. (U) Germain did not have the opportunity to clear this message before departing Algiers.

19. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
ERDMAN